THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) to (d) In February, 2004, the Ministry has declared 7457 kms of State Roads in the country as National Highways. It is premature to indicate any time-frame for further declaration of National Highways. Out of total length of about 13.76 kms of Agartala Bypass, presently the work is in progress in the portion from km. 0.00 to 6.75. The physical progress on this project is 7% and it is likely to be completed by 2007.

Setting up of National Sea Waterways body

1569. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to set up a National Sea Waterways body on the lines of National Highway Authority;

(b) if so, the details of the proposed plan which would connect n^jor ports of the East and West coast; and

(c) how far this would help to improve the economy of the coastal area population?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPINGi ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI TR. BAALU): (a) Declaration of port channels as National Sea Waterways in a phased manner beginning with major ports and their development and maintenance through Central Govemment funding (on the lines of National Highways) is envisaged in the draft outline of the 'Sagar Mala' Programme as also in the draft of the Policy for the Maritime Sector (Ports, Shipping and IWT). However, there is no proposal to set up a National Sea Waterways body

(b) and (c) It is proposed to take up the Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project to provide a direct navigable route within India's territorial waters between the country's east and west coasts, which is different from the National Sea Waterways. This project is expected to lead to the emergence of associated and ancillary industries along the coastal areas and contributes to its overall economic development.

Road projects with NHAI

1570. MS. PRAMILABOHIDAR: Will the Minister of SHIPPING ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an amount of Rs. 59,000 crores is proposed